

Increasing Access Success Story

Recreation Opportunities



Why it started...

Recreation Opportunities began as a program offered by a community-based, not-for-profit society called Rainbows of Opportunity. Rainbows of Opportunity was operated by volunteers who fundraised to provide fee subsidy opportunities to those in need. However, as Kelowna's population boomed, need outgrew the capacity of the volunteer operation.

The City of Kelowna recognized the important role that Rainbows of Opportunity played in the lives of many community members. An initiative was spearheaded by a recreation coordinator to maintain the availability of fee assistance options for those in need. Kelowna's Recreation Opportunities framework was based on the Rainbows of Opportunity model and developed in collaboration with a community-wide task group.

What it is...

The City of Kelowna's Recreation Opportunities program is a fee assistance model that leverages successful partnerships. It is comprised of four components.

Drop-in Coupons for Services: Numbered coupon booklets are allocated to community organizations to distribute to clients in need of assistance. Each booklet has 25 tickets that may be used for any drop-in service at City-run facilities, including skating, swimming (for the whole family), aerobics including drop-in yoga, fitness centre, childminding, youth and adult sports. Clients may also choose to purchase a 1 or 3 month pass at 50% off. The coupons are coded with a number and front desk staff note general statistics upon redemption. Community organizations are trusted with the distribution of these booklets to their clients. The number of booklets given to each client is at the agency's discretion. Booklets are redistributed each year to organizations based on last year's usage.

Gift Certificates for Registered Programs: Gift certificates for 75% off of program registration or \$50 for passes is available each season per person, though case-by-case exceptions do occur. The equivalent of \$5000 is distributed annually towards registered program fee subsidy. Gift certificates are primarily accessed by adults, as other funding opportunities are available for children and youth. This opportunity is not advertised through traditional channels, but rather through community partners that work with people in need. Community organizations are trusted with referring clients to the Sport and Recreation Division. Although a meeting with the coordinator is required, income statements and other proof is not required.

Jumpstart Funding for Children (4-18yrs): The City of Kelowna has developed a partnership with the local Canadian Tire Jumpstart chapter for children aged 4-18 years. Kelowna is able



to distribute up to \$1800 in children's sport and physical activity program registrations every 6 months. The City invoices Canadian Tire for the program registrations and provides a report on registration numbers (no private information is required). A meeting or telephone conversation with the coordinator is required to ensure Jumpstart criteria are met, but again, no proof is required.

Access Pass for People with Permanent and Physical Disabilities: Three fee subsidy options exist for persons with disabilities.

- Facility Use Pass (75% off) for access to swimming and fitness centres.
- Program Pass (75% off) for free registration in adapted fitness programs that have City-supplied volunteer support workers to assist participants AND 50% off aquacize and land fitness.
- Combination Pass (67% off) for both benefits.

Documentation is required for this pass in the form of a letter from their pension provider, WCB, ICBC, Income Assistance or community social service agencies. The discount information is programmed into CLASS to enhance customer service. Clients do not need to wait for the coordinator to issue proof of the discount; front desk staff may process purchases almost immediately.

Why this initiative is a promising practice...

Recreation Opportunities provides a delivery model that works to eliminate barriers to accessing fee assistance. Community organizations that work with people in need are empowered to be an integral part in raising awareness of recreation opportunities and enabling their clients to participate. Their expertise in recognizing people in need of support is trusted and private information is not collected by the City.

This delivery model has also created efficiencies within the Sport and Recreation Division, as the coordinator who administers the program has more time to oversee the operations, maintain communication with community partners and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

This is also an example of top-level commitment to ensuring programs and services are accessible. Key decision makers recognize that the most important thing is that people in the community can access physical activity with ease and dignity.

Find out more...

Visit the City of Kelowna's Sport and Recreation [website](#).

To learn more about how you could offer a similar program in *your community*, check out the "How did they do it?" profile on the Everybody Active page @ www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca.